

## **FACT SHEET**

### **Timeline of Tuna/Dolphin Interaction**

- 1950's** Fishers discovered the as yet unexplained association between schools of large yellowfin tuna and certain schools of dolphin. As a result, tuna fishers in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP) began to use this association to locate yellowfin tuna.
- 1960's** Purse seine technology replaces pole and line fishing as a predominate method of harvesting tuna. Fishers begin setting nets around dolphins to harvest tuna swimming below.
- 1970's** The ETP fishery was dominated by U.S. vessels and annual dolphin mortality was listed at over 350,000. With enactment of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) incidental mortality from fishing by the U.S. domestic fleet began to decline, participation in the fishery by foreign vessels began to increase, and by the mid 1980's foreign fleets dominated the fishery.
- 1972** Congress ratified the MMPA in large part in response to public reaction to the high levels of dolphin mortality associated with the tuna fishery in the ETP.
- 1984** To address concerns regarding increased mortality by foreign vessels, Congress amended the MMPA to tighten the importation requirements for tunas harvested by foreign tuna vessels in the ETP.
- 1986** Estimates showed dolphin mortality from foreign fishing at over 110,000 for the year, while U.S. mortality was under 21,000.
- 1988** Congress again amended the MMPA, imposing additional requirements on both U.S. fishers and imports of foreign tuna.
- 1990** The total dolphin mortality from foreign fishing was over 47,000, while U.S.-associated dolphin mortality was around 5,000. Congress enacted the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act which established standards for tuna labeled as dolphin-safe. The Act did not actually require dolphin-safe labeling, but U.S. tuna canners voluntarily purchased tuna only from vessels where no dolphins were intentionally encircled during the entire fishing trip.
- 1990's** Foreign participation in the ETP fishery continued to increase, and dolphin mortality was managed through the voluntary International Dolphin Conservation Program under the auspices of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). The U.S. fleet's participation in the ETP tuna fishery declined to less than ten vessels due to other economic opportunities in the Western Pacific Ocean and MMPA prohibitions in the ETP.
- 1992** The total dolphin mortality from foreign fishing was approximately 15,100, while U.S.-associated dolphin mortality totaled 431. The International Dolphin Conservation Act (IDCA) was passed to encourage an international moratorium on the practice of harvesting tuna through the use of purse seine nets deployed on or to encircle dolphins or other marine mammals. The IDCA also established U.S. mortality limits and required that the number of dolphins killed decrease from one year to the next.

The United States and the governments of Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Spain, whose vessels fish for tuna in the ETP,

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signed the La Jolla Agreement at the annual meeting of the IATTC. The Agreement placed voluntary limits on the maximum number of dolphin that could be incidentally killed annually in the fishery. The participants also agreed to lower the maximum each year over seven years, with a goal of eliminating mortality in the fishery.

- 1993** The U.S. fleet was successful in reducing dolphin mortality to an estimated 115.
- 1994** The IDCA prohibited U.S. citizens crewing on the vessels of other nations in the fishery from intentionally encircling marine mammals and made it unlawful for any person to sell tuna that wasn't dolphin-safe in the United States after June 1, 1994.
- 1995** The United States and other ETP tuna fishing nations met again and negotiated the Panama Declaration. The Panama Declaration established conservative annual dolphin mortality limits for each species or stock, and represented an important step toward reducing bycatch in commercial fisheries using sound ecosystem management.

Because the multi-nation yellowfin tuna fleet fishes in international waters, a binding international agreement is key to successfully protecting dolphins. The signing nations agreed to a binding international agreement for the continued protection of dolphin and the entire ETP ecosystem, providing the United States amended import requirements of the MMPA for those countries participating in the International Dolphin Conservation Program in the ETP.

The signatory nations expected that, if they reduced their dolphin mortality, the United States would amend its laws so that participation in the International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP) would satisfy comparability requirements of U.S. law and result in the lifting of embargoes on yellowfin tuna and yellowfin tuna products.

- 1997** In response to the Panama Declaration, Congress passed the International Dolphin Conservation Program Act (Act) to implement the IDCP. The Act primarily amends provisions in the MMPA dealing with yellowfin tuna in the ETP fishery. Key provisions of the Act became effective in March 1999.
- 1998** The countries participating in the IDCP successfully negotiated the international Agreement, which is a legally binding instrument for dolphin conservation and ecosystem management in the ETP. This agreement would become effective when four nations had ratified.
- 1999** The international Agreement on the IDCP became effective on February 15, 1999, when the fourth country ratified. The United States, Panama, Ecuador, Mexico, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Nicaragua are the countries that have ratified, to date. On March 3, 1999, the Secretary of State provided the required certification to Congress that the international agreement on the IDCP was in force. Key provisions of the IDCPA became effective on this date.

On June 14, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service published proposed regulations to implement the IDCPA. On December 22, the National Marine Fisheries Service published a proposed rule to designate an official Department of Commerce dolphin-safe label.

- 2000** On January 3, 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service published an interim final rule to implement the IDCPA. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published final regulations to designate an official dolphin-safe mark as required by the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act (DPCIA) on May 30, 2000.